COLLECTORS' CORNER #75 MARCH 19, 1976
HERBERT NELSON

WHAT'S AN OLD GRANDFATHER CLOCK WORTH
(VOICED PIECE AND INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW COLLECTORS' CORNER... THE VOICE OF AMERICA SERIES OF PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE WHO COLLECT THINGS -- WHETHER THEY BE STAMPS OR COINS, SNUFF BOTTLES OR OLD AUTOS, OR MERELY BALLS OF STRING. HERE IS HERBERT NELSON'S REPORT ON ONE OF THE FEW WOMEN APPRAISERS OF FINE ART IN THIS COUNTRY:

NARR: LEE DREXLER LOOKS LIKE A YOUNG COLLEGE STUDENT ON HER WAY TO CLASS. BUT THE TIME OF SERIOUS STUDY ENDED FOR HER ABOUT SIX YEARS AGO. SHE HAD EARNED HER MASTERS DEGREE IN ART AND ART HISTORY AND FOLLOWED THAT UP WITH RESEARCH AT THE PARIS LOUVRE AND OTHER MUSEUMS AROUND THE WORLD. NOW THIS LADY IS PRESIDENT OF HER OWN COMPANY, ESQUIRE APPRAISALS, WITH FIVE YEARS OF HARD-WON EXPERIENCE IN HER FIELD. A COMBINATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND INTUITION HAVE MADE HER A FIRST-RATE APPRAISER WHO IS CALLED UPON TO DETERMINE THE VALUE OF NEARLY ANYTHING FROM ANCIENT GLASSWARE TO A REMBRANDT ETCHING AND BEYOND...

TAPE: CUT ONE -- DREXLER

"I PARTICULARLY ENJOY ORIENTAL WORKS OF ART -- FURNITURE AND FURNISHINGS -- PORCELAIN AND JADES. AND I DO A LOT OF EIGHTEENTH, NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY FURNITURE AND FURNISHINGS -- I WOULD SAY I DO THOSE CENTURIES THE MOST. I DO PRE-COLUMBIAN WORK ALSO."

NARR: IT'S NOT ONLY IN THE FIELD OF FINE ARTS AND ANTIQUES THAT PEOPLE TURN TO HER. SHE HAS BEEN ASKED TO APPRAISE SUCH ODDITIES AS A GROUP OF AFRICAN POISONS OR A COLLECTION OF FIVE-THOUSAND EARLY ROCK 'N ROLL RECORDS...

TAPE: CUT TWO -- DREXLER

"I DID AN APPRAISAL OF STUFFED ANIMALS BROUGHT BACK FROM A SAFARI ONCE: ELEPHANT FEET THAT HAD BEEN MADE INTO COFFEE TABLES -- AND ENGLARGED TUSKS THAT WERE STUDDED WITH SEMI-PRECIOUS JEWELS ON THE BASE AND SET IN SILVER -- AND THERE WAS AN OSTRICH EGG CHANDELIER WHICH WAS REALLY QUITE BEAUTIFUL."

NARR: LEE DREXLER DID HER JOB, THOUGH SHE WASN'T TOO CRAZY ABOUT THE IDEA OF STUFFED ANIMALS USED FOR DECORATIVE PURPOSES. SHE PREFERS TO KEEP TO HER FAVORITE WORLD OF FINE ARTS AND ANTIQUES. AND OVER THE YEARS SHE HAS DISCOVERED THAT BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND INTUITION ALONE ARE NOT ALWAYS ENOUGH TO COME UP WITH THE CORRECT APPRAISAL.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- DREXLER

"FOR AN APPRAISER A GOOD DEAL OF THE BUSINESS OF APPRAISING IS DOING YOUR HOMEWORK. NO APPRAISER KNOWS EVERYTHING. AN APPRAISER HAS TO BE WILLING TO TAKE TIME OUT TO RESEARCH THINGS. SOMETIMES I'LL HAVE A WEEK WHERE EVERY DAY THERE CAN BE HOURS AND HOURS AND HOURS WORTH OF RESEARCH JUST FOR ONE ITEM."

NARR: MISSUS DREXLER'S FINAL APPRAISAL OFTEN COMES AS QUITE A SURPRISE TO THE PEOPLE WHO ASKED FOR HER SERVICES. SOMETIMES SHE HAS TO TELL PEOPLE WHO THINK THEIR COLLECTIONS OR SINGLE ART PIECES ARE WORTH FORTUNES OR THAT THEY AREN'T WORTH A PENNY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THINGS OWNERS CONSIDER TO BE NOTHING BUT JUNK TURN OUT TO

NARR: (CONT'D) BE REAL TREASURES. PERHAPS THE MOST INTERESTING EXPERIENCE LEE DREXLER HAD WAS IN EVALUATING AN OLD GRANDFATHER CLOCK. THE PEOPLE WHO OWNED IT HAD NO IDEA OF WHAT IT COULD BE WORTH. OUR YOUNG APPRAISER WASN'T SURE, EITHER. IT WAS A CLOCK MADE BY A MAN NAMED EDWARD EASTUS. BUT WHO WAS EDWARD EASTUS? AND WHEN DID HE CREATE THIS PIECE? LEE DREXLER LOOKED THROUGH ALL THE BOOKS SHE COULD FIND ON THE SUBJECT OF OLD CLOCKS. SHE ALSO CONTACTED A NUMBER OF CLOCK EXPERTS. NOBODY SEEMED TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT EDWARD EASTUS...

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- DREXLER

"I WAS READY TO PUT DOWN JUST A PRICE OF ABOUT FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THE CLOCK, BUT I DECIDED THAT I HAD TO GO FURTHER. I JUST HAD THE FEELING ABOUT IT THAT THIS WAS GOING TO BE MORE VALUABLE. AND I FINALLY FOUND AN EXPERT WHO KNEW WHO EDWARD EASTUS WAS -- A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CLOCKMAKER WHO WORKED FOR CHARLES THE SECOND -- AND WE PUT A PRICE DOWN OF SIXTY-THOUSAND DOLLARS WHICH IS WHAT IT WOULD HAVE BROUGHT AT AN AUCTION. THE REASON WHY NO ONE KNEW ABOUT EDWARD EASTUS IS, THAT THE VERY FEW CLOCKS OF HIS, THAT ARE REMAINING, ARE IN MUSEUMS AND THEY HAVEN'T COME UP AT SALES."

NARR: WELL, NOBODY CAN SAY THAT LEE DREXLER ISN'T ALWAYS AT WORK. EVEN THE HOMES OF FRIENDS OR ACQUAINTANCES AREN'T SAFE FROM THE EAGER LADY'S INQUISITIVE NATURE...

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- DREXLER

"MY HUSBAND IS ALWAYS GOING CRAZY, HE JUST CAN'T STAND IT WHEN WE GO TO FRIENDS' HOUSES -- AND I WALK IN -- AND I JUST CAN'T KEEP MY HANDS OFF SOMETHING -- I'VE GOT TO TURN IT OVER AND LOOK AT IT. AND SOMETIMES, IF I DON'T KNOW THE PEOPLE VERY WELL, AND IT'S NOT POLITE, I SORT OF HAVE TO WAIT 'TIL THEY TURN THEIR BACKS, AND I TURN IT OVER. I ABSOLUTELY CAN'T RESIST IT -- I MEAN, IT'S COMPULSIVE -- I'VE GOT TO KNOW WHAT THE THING IS."

NARR: LEE DREXLER DOESN'T JUST TURN INTERESTING PIECES OF FURNISHINGS OVER AND LOOK AT THEM. IN SOME CASES SHE HAS TO FEEL THEIR TEXTURE, OR EVEN SMELL THEM....

TAPE: CUT SIX -- DREXLER

"EVERY TIME I GET A VASE I ALWAYS SMELL IT. PEOPLE THINK I'M CRAZY. BUT YOU CAN GET A SENSE OF AGE FROM THE SMELL. AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OR SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CHINESE PORCELAIN PIECE -- IF YOU SMELL THAT YOU'VE GOT A GOOD IDEA, A GOOD STARTING POINT RIGHT AWAY -- IF YOU'VE GOT A GOOD NOSE."

NARR: OF COURSE, ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT TASKS FOR AN APPRAISER IS TO JUDGE WHETHER AN ITEM IS A COPY, A FAKE OR THE REAL THING...

TAPE: CUT SEVEN -- DREXLER

"APPRAISERS DON'T GET FOOLED BY TWENTIETH-CENTURY REPRODUCTIONS OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ITEMS -- THAT'S NEVER A PROBLEM. BUT WHERE THERE IS A DISTINCT PROBLEM -- AND WHERE MANY PEOPLE GET FOOLED -- IS THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY COPIES, WHEN THE WORKMANSHIP WAS STILL VERY FINE -- AND YOU GET A PIECE THAT'S A HUNDRED YEARS OLD -- AND IT'S NOT EASY TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HUNDRED YEARS AND TWO-HUNDRED YEARS. YOU'VE GOT THE LOOK OF AGE, YOU'VE GOT ALL THE SIGNS OF AGE, AND YOU CAN HAVE SOME EXTREMELY FINE WORK."

NARR: THAT'S WHY NINETEENTH-CENTURY COPIES OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ITEMS CAN DEMAND A HANDSOME PRICE -- OF COURSE, FAR BELOW THE PRICE FOR THE REAL EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PIECES.

LEX DREXLER -- THE EXPERIENCED APPRAISER WITH THE LOOKS OF A YOUNG COLLEGE STUDENT -- COULD HAVE GONE ON FOR HOURS TALKING ABOUT HER FIELD OF ENDEAVOR.

NARR: (CONT'D) BUT SHE HAD TO RUSH TO HER NEXT ASSIGNMENT -- TO ANOTHER ATTIC THAT MIGHT HOLD A TREASURE, OR JUST SOMETHING READY FOR THE JUNK YARD

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN COLLECTORS' CORNER ...WITH NOTES ON THE WORLD OF COLLECTORS WHO BUY AND SELL, AND ABOVE ALL CHERISH ALL SORTS OF THINGS AND KEEP APPRAISERS CONSTANTLY RESEARCHING TO DETERMINE THEIR VALUE. NEXT WEEK (AT THIS TIM) ANOTHER LOOK INTO THE COLLECTORS' CORNER. THIS IS ----------.

###

RC/CAK